

Programs in GT Score Shift and Effect Student, Teachers and Community Alike

With a New Principal GT Score a School for Disabled Students in Granite School District Experiences Extreme and Unexpected Changes to the Fundamentals of their Teaching Program, Impacting the Lives of the Students.

Avery Zin has dedicated 5 school years working at Post High, a school within the Granite School District. As a contract instructor – teachers assistant – in the Paths to Employment program she works with disabled students – 18 - 22 years old – in a school designed for empowering them. Supporting them through learning new skills she helps them get as close to Independent living as they can.

In November 2022 the district hired Tiffany as the new principal. Right away she told the staff that at the start of the 2023 school year there would be changes made to the program.

Zinn says Tiffany was very elusive about what the changes were going to be. As it turned out, the changes were widespread. “Pretty much everything changed and I think that was kind of the big shock of it all,” says Zinn.

Coming into the first day of school this year Avery was greeted with these changes. The program/school that she taught was no longer Post High but GT score - Granit Transition Service, and with that name came a whole new way of doing things.

These changes disabled some programs and added new ones. Previously students engaged in different activities during different days - campus days, community days and job site days. Students would spend time learning home skills, cooking, laundry, cleaning. Working towards their IEP goals and a better understanding of budgeting and the resources available to them, in classrooms. Community days involve visiting community resource building, riding the UTA Utah's public transportation system, and sometimes having fun going bowling and practicing budgeting. Finally working in job sites across the city learning to work in a supported environment. However, as the new system was implemented, now students spend various amounts of time on campus in the community and working in the jobsites. At the moment, some students contribute up to 9 hr a week in “volunteer work” without compensation.

To add to this, Avery Zin used to work in the bus training program teaching kids to independently ride the UTA. Arriving at their houses in the morning, Zin would ride the buses with students to and from school until the students felt comfortable riding on their own. This program's cancellation is one of the many changes in GT Score and even if we don't know the reason behind it, the effect it has is still evident. Unless this program's cancellation is vetoed within 2 years no Gt Score students will be able to ride the buses to and from school on their own as they were never taught.

Another more specific change is the inability to document behavior. Documentation is an important part of working with kids prone to aggression and running away. Teachers previously

had a system to document aggression and running, submitting forms when these behaviors occur and sitting down with the principal and parents to make plans to mitigate these behaviors. These plans taught would teach students other ways to express themselves and how to control themselves. Teachers no longer have a way to report behaviors or keep track of behaviors this leads to the inability to make behavior plans.

“Because we are not reporting it and we are being discharged from talking about it, we are seeing more incidents with students that are having these behaviors and it's not being well controlled” Zin says, “I think it has affected the safety of the staff the students and the community if we take a student with behaviors like this out in the community and we don't have a great behavior plan in place then someone in the community could get hurt and that can lead to something a lot worse”

about the disabling of these plans.

GT Score also has a sister school, The Jones Center, a program for kids within Granite School District that also focuses on similar skills, with a cafeteria, laundromat, and conference rooms all managed by disabled students. Upon coming to work on the first day of school in 2023 Jones Center staff were informed of changes that had been made to their programs. The Jones Center would no longer be for disabled students but for the credit recovery of Granite School District students who may have struggled in their previous schools's. No other explanation was given for this. This displaces the students already going there. Now the students stay in their respective schools across the district without a supported environment to learn the vocational skills in the Jones center.

Though the repercussions of these changes may not affect a large part of Salt Lake's population, it is important to be aware of what is happening in our community minorities. As this story continues with Zin and her fellow teacher trying to get Tiffany out of the principal's seat, something that we can do is educate ourselves on this event and on the disabled communities of our Salt Lake City.